DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 445 106 TM 031 788

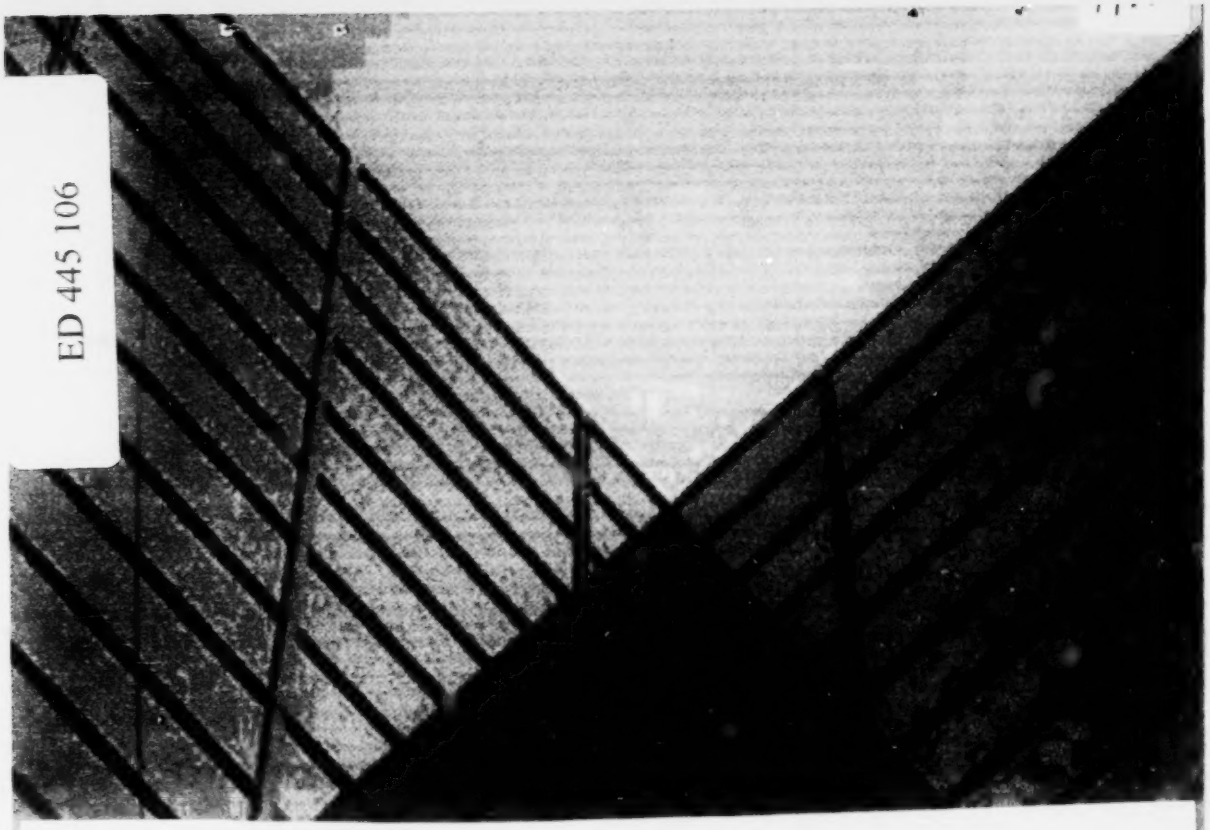
TITLE	Dispelling the Culture of Mediocrity: Expanding Advanced Placement.
INSTITUTION	College Entrance Examination Board, New York, NY.; Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2000-08-00
NOTE	26p.
AVAILABLE FROM	ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398. Tel: 877-433-7827 (Toll Free); Fax: 301-470-1244; e-mail: edpubs@inet.ed.gov; Web site: http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; *Advanced Placement; Advanced Placement Programs; *Course Selection (Students); *High School Students; High Schools

ABSTRACT

This booklet discusses the need to expand advanced placement programs for high school students and gives some examples of programs that are giving more students the opportunity to take advanced placement courses. The greatest challenge is to increase the numbers of poor and minority students taking Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and other demanding courses. Research has demonstrated the connection between taking more challenging courses and greater success in college. One of the greatest challenges to expanding advanced placement programs is low expectations that suggest that rigorous classes are too hard on students. New grants from the U.S. Department of Education are designed to fund the expansion of advanced courses and programs, and state governments are also working to increase advanced placement opportunities. Many colleges and universities are cooperating with the Advanced Placement program, the International Baccalaureate, and other courses to offer a college-level curriculum to high school students. Several examples show that these programs, like those sponsored by foundations, are helping greater numbers of students choose advanced placement. It is apparent, however, that the road to advanced placement should start well before high school, and even before middle school, with vocabulary development and reading achievement opportunities for young children. (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 445 106



Dispelling the Culture of Mediocrity: EXPANDING ADVANCED PLACEMENT

TM031788

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

This report is co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and the College Board, and highlights certain programs that provide opportunities for students to take challenging courses and earn college credit while still in high school. These are just examples of promising practices and programs, and there are likely to be others not included in the report. The Department of Education does not endorse these programs, and the opinions expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Education.

The text of this document is in the public domain. Authorization to reproduce this document in whole or in part is granted, and permission to reprint this document is not necessary. The citation, if used, should be: U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Secretary, *Dispelling the Culture of Mediocrity: Expanding Advanced Placement*. Washington, D.C.: Author, 2000. The College Board, Advanced Placement Program, AP, and the acorn logo are registered trademarks of the College Entrance Examination Board.

August 2000

To Order Copies
To order copies of this report, contact ED Pubs (the Department's Education Publications Center)
as follows:

Write to:
ED Pubs
U.S. Department of Education
P.O. Box 1398
Jessup, MD 20794-1398

Fax: 301-470-1244
E-mail: edpubs@inet.ed.gov
ED Pubs Web site: http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html
Call toll-free: 877-433-7827 (877-4-ED-PUBS). If 877 service is not yet available in your area, call 800- 872-5327 (800-USA-LEARN).

You also may order copies by contacting:
Frank Robinson, U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20202

On request, this publication is available in alternative formats, such as Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette. For more information, please contact the Department's Alternate Format Center at 202-260-9895 or 202-205-8113.

Dispelling the Culture of Mediocrity: EXPANDING ADVANCED PLACEMENT

U.S. Department of Education

Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

Terry Peterson
Counselor and Senior Advisor to Secretary Riley
Office of the Secretary

Jill Riemer
Advisor to the Counselor
Office of the Secretary

Judith Johnson
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Frank Robinson
Director of the Advanced Placement Incentive Program
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Cathy Grimes-Miller
Program Attorney
Office of General Counsel

The College Board®

Lee Jones
Executive Director of the Advanced Placement Program®
The College Board

CONTENTS

Critical Need for Educational Quality 1

Opening Doors, Providing Opportunities 3

Challenging Coursework Leads to Greater Success in College 5

Challenges to Expanding Advanced Placement Programs 6

Confronting the Challenges to Expanding Advanced Placement Programs 8

- *Federal and State Governments* 9
- *Colleges and Universities* 11
- *Foundations* 13
- *Private Sector* 14
- *Schools* 16
- *The College Board* 17

An Early Start Is Critical to Success 18

Dispelling the Culture of Mediocrity:
EXPANDING ADVANCED PLACEMENT

"We need a 21st century revolution in education, guided by our faith that *every single child can learn*. Because education is more important than ever, more than ever the key to our children's future, we must make sure *all* our children have that key. That means quality pre-school and after-school, the best-trained teachers in the classroom, and college opportunities for *all* our children."

-President Clinton
State of the Union Address
January 2000

Critical Need for Educational Quality

Ensuring that all children receive a high-quality education is no longer just a moral imperative, but an economic and social necessity. Despite the attention and support provided to improve education, certain children are still not receiving the education they need and deserve. We must find ways to educate our poor and minority children properly, for each child's overall well-being and for the success of our nation.

In today's global, technology-centered economy, individuals need to be well educated and possess higher-level thinking skills to compete professionally. A solid foundation in basic skills will no longer suffice.

This is the mark of a new era. Not too long ago, a high school diploma combined with a strong work ethic was the key to opening the gates of access to good jobs and a better future. But now the lock on the gates has been changed. The college degree has replaced the high school diploma as the pass to economic advancement. Between 1989 and 1997, for example, the wage difference between college-educated and non-college-educated men has widened 12 percent.

These wage figures are even more alarming given minority students' low level of college degree attainment and a significant demographic shift in the school-age population. In 1997, among people ages 25 to 29, only 14 percent of African-Americans and 11 percent of Hispanics completed four or more years of college, compared with 33 percent of whites. Approximately 36 percent of the nation's current students are members of minority groups. Some statisticians predict that, by 2004, that figure will increase to 55 percent. By failing to provide a solid education to all children, we reduce both their chances of attaining a college degree and, therefore, their opportunities to achieve economic success.

This failure to provide a high-quality education to all children not only hinders them in their individual career pursuits, it also weakens society as a whole. If we do not develop the potential of poor and minority children, our society will not be able to maintain its economic strength. Today, in three of the nation's most critical national institutions—the public schools, the information technology sector, and the national defense—we are facing a talent shortage. The following describes the most pressing current and future employment needs:

- Over the next 10 years, we will need over 200,000 teachers each year to balance growing student enrollments, rising teacher retirements and normal attrition. These future teachers are people who must be well equipped to earn at least bachelor's and master's degrees and have the solid foundation to teach to higher academic standards.

- The information technology industry needs an estimated 400,000 more qualified employees today. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, an average of 150 new information technology jobs will be created every single day from now until the year 2005. Typically, these jobs require workers with two- and four-year degrees as well as master's and doctorate degrees. We must build a better pipeline of well-prepared young people to meet the demands of an increasingly technological society that relies on electronic communications to function.

- Even with a smaller military, our armed services need more than 100,000 new recruits a year. While military personnel are usually not college graduates, they, too, need to possess an above-average level of verbal and math skills to competently perform their duties.

Over the last 10 years, we have started to recognize that the jobs of the future will require a mastery of basic skills plus more advanced competencies. The movement to raise education standards for all students has helped attract attention to this new way of thinking. But as the standards movement progresses, it is clear that success requires increasing the quality of teachers for all students, improving the conditions in urban and rural schools, and raising academic expectations for all children. All of these pieces must be in place if we are going to improve the achievement level for all children and erase historically low expectations for too many students.

If we are to create the expectation that all students are capable of high-level achievement, we need a rigorous curriculum and teachers who can help students master the material. In addition, we need challenging tests to measure these higher levels of student achievement. The College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Program and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Organization provide long-standing, solid models of how all of these elements can be combined to lead to improve student learning. Since 1955 and 1965, respectively, the College Board and the International Baccalaureate Organization have been offering college-level courses to high school students.

Opening Doors, Providing Opportunities

The greatest challenge is to increase the number of poor and minority students taking Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and other demanding courses. Although the number of African-American and Hispanic students taking the Advanced Placement exams has increased significantly, more work needs to be done. Currently, 31 percent of AP students are from minority populations, and 7.8 percent of AP exams are taken by students from low-income families; only one in 20 students who take the AP exam is African-American.

We need to continue to increase these numbers because, according to Terry Peterson, counselor and chief advisor to U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, "Advanced Placement courses are forceful gate-openers for poor and minority students." Through these courses, he says, disadvantaged students have the opportunity to excel in an environment where there are well-established high standards for learning. "Advanced Placement and similar, rigorous courses," he says, "can help level the playing field and increase the odds that students from diverse social backgrounds and ethnic groups attend college."

College-level courses challenge high school students to work harder and to learn more. The courses also give them a sense of what to expect in college. Armed with the knowledge that they have taken college-level courses in high school, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate students gain academic confidence that leads to a promising start in postsecondary education.

Advanced Placement courses are forceful gate-openers for poor and minority students.

-Terry Peterson
Counselor and Chief Advisor to U.S. Secretary of Education

But many Advanced Placement students gain more than just confidence. A grade of 3 or higher on the comprehensive AP exam can earn students college credit or advanced standing in their college coursework. Receiving college credit means some students can enter college as sophomores, reducing college attendance by a year and potentially saving over $30,000. Students who receive advanced standing have the opportunity to explore more fully their academic interests through electives and other activities.

While the focus of Advanced Placement is on individual students, they are not the only ones who benefit from an AP curriculum. Advanced Placement courses also enable teachers to teach more rigorous content, attend high-quality professional development institutes and workshops, measure student achievement with a national exam, and use guides, curriculum,

and other support materials. Advanced Placement maintains its high standards by re-examining its courses every four to five years. This review verifies that an AP course covers the breadth of information, skills, activities, and assignments of a corresponding college course. In addition, studies are conducted every five years that compare the on-site performance of university students on a particular AP examination with their actual university grade in that course.

In fact, Jay Mathews, a well-respected education writer at the *Washington Post*, has argued that the strength of a high school can be measured by using Advanced Placement courses as the key variable. With all of the emphasis on low test scores, uncertified teachers, out-of-field teaching, and teacher shortages, school staff often feel maligned. AP courses are shining examples of positive efforts to improve the academic opportunities offered to all students. Strong AP courses can help create an energy and excitement about learning because they challenge students to reach beyond a regular high school curriculum.

Challenging Coursework Leads to Greater Success in College

A recent U.S. Department of Education monograph, *Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor's Degree Attainment*, found that completing a solid academic core in high school was more strongly correlated with a student's attainment of a bachelor's degree than high school test scores, grade point average, or class rank. In the study, the number of Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses taken by students was a key indicator of the rigor of a student's course load.

The research found that high school seniors who took no AP courses graduated from college at a rate of only 33 percent by age 30. Those students who took only one Advanced Placement course nearly doubled the likelihood of graduation to 59 percent. And students who took two or more AP courses raised the likelihood to 76 percent. This figure is well above the average college graduation rate of 63 percent. These

numbers are strong evidence that increasing the number of courses like AP and IB can increase the percentage of students who graduate from college.

This is especially true for African-American and Latino students. *Answers in the Toolbox* showed that an intensive academic curriculum in high school had the strongest positive effect for these students. In fact, students from the lowest income groups who had high test scores, high grade point averages, and strong academic core courses were more likely to earn a degree than the majority of students from the top income group.

One of the biggest effects Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and other college-level courses can have is dispelling the attitude of many poor and minority students that college is not an option for them. Through Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate, schools can help poor and minority students set – and achieve – high goals. As Dr. Benjamin Mayes, a mentor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., put it, "The biggest tragedy of life is not failing to reach your goals – the biggest tragedy lies in having no goals to reach."

Challenges to Expanding Advanced Placement Programs

Newsweek magazine once compared AP courses to the "best family china, brought out only for special guests." The magazine wrote that offering rigorous courses to only the best students "occurs in most American high schools and is usually justified, like bunny slopes for uncertain skiers, as a way to save ill-prepared students from crashing into mountainous reading lists. Yet...[this] practice can be blamed for much of the low motivation and achievement [in our high schools]."

If these are the courses that are increasingly offered, we will have an even more difficult time recruiting students who are academically prepared to take rigorous AP courses. We must reverse this trend.

-Gerald Tirozzi
Executive Director
National Association of Secondary School Principals

This attitude is the first and most imposing obstacle to overcome to increase the number of Advanced Placement courses. People who oppose the expansion of AP and IB courses because they believe that such rigorous classes are too hard on students, or that the inclusion of more students will weaken high standards, are preventing students – primarily those who are disadvantaged – from reaching their potential.

The "tyranny of low expectations" is supported by the fact that the greatest increase in high school course registration was in general-track courses. Gerald N. Tirozzi, executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals and former assistant secretary of education, has called for eliminating these general courses and limiting students to a choice of only college preparation or workplace-oriented, technical programs. Tirozzi recently noted, "In *Answers in the Toolbox*, the students who topped the scale of college completion rates had no remedial math or English courses – often known as terminal math and English. If these are the courses that are increasingly offered, we will have an even more difficult time recruiting students who are academically prepared to take rigorous courses. We must reverse this trend."

High-quality teachers usually are not the ones "dumbing down" the curriculum and teaching general courses. They already are holding their students to high standards. But poor working conditions and low wages often dissuade teachers from working in urban and rural schools. It is often difficult in these schools to identify teachers who can teach Advanced Placement courses. And teachers are critical to the success of an AP program. In many ways, they make or break the AP experience. If programs are to thrive, states and districts must commit to professional development. Unfortunately, many urban and rural districts – already strapped by limited resources – do not designate enough funding to develop and support teachers in AP curricula.

Limited resources and conflicting priorities – raising test scores, reducing class size, teaching English language learners, improving discipline – can hold schools back from increasing their number of Advanced Placement courses. School

administrators, principals, and teachers often feel overwhelmed by the enormity of some of the tasks at hand. But they do not need to feel like they alone must correct the difficult problems facing schools. As Secretary Riley said, by quoting a recent Newsweek article on this topic, "It all boils down to this: When you innovate, create partnerships, improve teaching, and have high expectations for students, you can get many more students off the bunny slopes and onto the Advanced Placement slopes." Together, federal and state governments, colleges and universities, private companies, nonprofit foundations, and local schools can tackle the issues facing our nation's schools and open up opportunities for all students through courses like Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate.

> It all boils down to this – when you innovate, create partnerships, improve teaching, and have high expectations for students, you can get many more students off the bunny slopes and onto the Advanced Placement slopes.
>
> -Secretary Riley
> *U.S. Secretary of Education*

Confronting the Challenges to Expanding Advanced Placement Programs

The U.S. Department of Education recognizes the critical need to increase the number of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and other similarly rigorous courses in our nation's schools. To demonstrate its commitment to the effort, the Department has awarded grants to support and expand advanced courses and programs. This investment increased from $4 million to $15 million in FY2000. This money will help to continue to pay for low-income students to take the exams, professional development for teachers, and other efforts designed to increase the participation of low-income students in AP, IB, and other courses and exams that enable high school students to earn college credit. In addition, the Department has proposed $20 million in these grants over the next year, which is an increase of 33 percent over this year's funding, and a 500 percent increase over the funding of two years ago.

The new grants support the expansion of Advanced Placement programs, moving beyond covering the costs for students to take the test. They are start-up monies that leverage resources

to build new, greatly expanded educational opportunities, partnerships, and initiatives in each state. While eliminating AP examination fees for poor and minority groups enables a greater pool of students to complete the exam, a lasting expansion of AP courses encourages more comprehensive approaches. If federal and state governments, colleges and universities, nonprofit foundations, private companies, and local schools would work together, all students would have access to these college-level curricula. Fortunately, many successful efforts to extend AP and similar programs to underserved students are already under way.

Federal and State Governments

In February 2000, educators and administrators from 43 states and Puerto Rico, as well as leaders and representatives of major education organizations, the U.S. Department of Education, and the College Board, convened to discuss strategies to expand Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and other similar programs to disadvantaged students. The conference participants discussed a variety of strategies concerning how to most effectively use the $15 million in grants – available under the Department's Advanced Placement Incentive Program – to expand these programs.

> By extending AP to many more inner city and rural schools, we can raise the quality of instruction and levels of achievement for students who have been historically underserved.
>
> -Gaston Caperton
> *President*
> The College Board

Secretary Riley announced to participants the Clinton Administration's goal to help every American high school offer advanced courses within the next 10 years. In his keynote address, the Secretary stated, "I believe we can help every high school in America add at least one advanced course each year for the next 10 years. That's a goal we can meet, particularly in light of the growing interest in challenging courses." Riley cited new research that "shows that between 1984 and 1997, the number of AP exams taken by 12th-graders nearly tripled, going from 50 exams per 1,000 students to 131 exams." If we can make this happen, by 2010

every high school junior or senior could have the option of taking five Advanced Placement exams a year.

In response to the Secretary's call, College Board President Gaston Caperton has initiated an ambitious national action plan to make universal access to Advanced Placement a reality for all American high school students. Caperton notes, "By extending AP to many more inner city and rural schools, we can raise the quality of instruction and levels of achievement for students who have been historically underserved. But we must insist on maintaining the current high quality of AP courses. This will require education leaders, civil rights leaders, elected officials, and the College Board to take bold, innovative steps to attract more high-quality teachers to economically disadvantaged districts, to train them to teach college-level courses, and to retain them for a significant period of time."

As part of its national action plan, the College Board aims to help increase the number of Advanced Placement teachers from 100,000 today to 180,000 before the year 2010. Because successful Advanced Placement programs require competent, well-trained teachers, the College Board will work with colleges, universities, and other organizations to create extensive online teacher professional development programs and double the current number of AP teacher workshops and training institutes. The organization also plans to partner with colleges of arts and sciences and colleges of education to train high-quality AP teachers. Because successful teachers often rely on competent administrators, the College Board will expand administrator workshops for high-growth areas such as California, Texas, and Florida.

While the College Board strives to improve Advanced Placement programs and teacher training, the state and federal governments work to support these programs. In addition to receiving federal money, schools and students in 26 states and the District of Columbia receive aid from their state to support AP programs. Eleven states support AP programs through funds for professional development institutes, supplies and materials, and mandates for requiring AP courses in schools. In Connecticut, the state Department of Education pays for

summer institutes at Connecticut State University sites – a demonstration of Connecticut's commitment to teacher quality and professional development. Since 1985, Utah has granted over $1 million a year to schools for supplies, professional development, and other AP costs. Virginia requires every high school to offer two AP courses and awards special diplomas to those students who score a 3 or higher on AP exams.

Fifteen of these 26 states pay for some or all of the exam fee for disadvantaged students, affording these students the opportunity to benefit from all that AP courses have to offer. In fact, the first state to enact this sort of funding was South Carolina during the administration of then-Gov. Richard W. Riley in 1983.

Colleges and Universities

For too long, public schools and their neighboring colleges and universities have operated in isolation. Partnerships between secondary schools and institutions of higher education should be the norm, not the exception. Colleges and universities need to view public schools as vital to the success of their institutions. After all, in many communities, it is likely that the students educated in local classrooms will someday be in the lecture halls of the local university. Colleges and universities have the golden opportunity to work in collaboration with the public schools to make sure they are supporting local school efforts in every way possible.

Many colleges and universities, especially community colleges, are seizing this opportunity for partnership through collaboration with AP, IB, and other courses that offer a college-level curriculum to high school students. Following are several examples:

- **College Now** is a collaborative, educational program that offers high school students the opportunity to earn college credit, assess and sharpen basic skills, and explore the college experience while in high school. The combined efforts of the City University of New York (CUNY), Kingsborough Community College, and the New York

City Board of Education have enabled approximately 13,000 11th-and 12th-grade students at more than 100 public high schools to take courses at every CUNY college. Over the next three years, the College Now program will be expanded to an estimated 45,000 students in grades nine through 12 in more than 200 high schools. A study by CUNY's Office of Institutional Research and Analysis found that College Now alumni were more likely to enter baccalaureate programs than other college freshmen, took less remedial coursework in college, earned more degree credits, and were less likely to drop out.

- The University of California at Santa Cruz now provides Advanced Placement courses online through its **UC College Prep Initiative (UCCP)**. The distance learning project started in fall 1998 with a pilot effort that reached 64 students in 14 schools. In fall 1999, the program expanded to 200 students in seven California counties. Districts with high numbers of low-income and English language learners were given first priority. The program offers courses in chemistry, English language and composition, macroeconomics, physics, statistics, and others. UCCP works closely with the schools to determine the area of greatest need and the technological and other resources available to make the project a success.

- Since 1972, **Syracuse University Project Advance**, a not-for-profit auxiliary unit of Syracuse University (SU), has grown to become one of the largest and oldest concurrent enrollment programs in the United States. Project Advance's primary mission is to offer qualified high school students the opportunity to enroll in Syracuse University introductory courses. Over 400 teachers offer SU courses in 13 content areas, including biology, chemistry, public affairs, information studies, sociology, and others. Project Advance serves 120 selected high schools in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Maine, and Michigan and currently enrolls approximately 3,800. Project Advance students do well in college: In a recent study, 93 percent of Project Advance graduates reported receiving an average

grade of B or above through four years of college. Sixty-eight percent plan to attend graduate school.

Foundations

Targeted efforts by foundations can have tremendous impacts on expanding AP and other college-level programs when those efforts are sustained over several years and are comprehensive in their focus. An encouraging example of such efforts is the Dallas Public Schools Advanced Placement Incentive Program, founded and funded by the O'Donnell Foundation in Dallas, Texas.

The Dallas Public Schools AP Incentive Program, a five-year effort that concludes in 2000, focuses on improving participation and performance in AP math, science, and English in nine Dallas high schools. This program, along with two similar O'Donnell Foundation programs that focuses on the arts and music, operates on simple principles: the power of incentives and the centrality of the teacher in the academic experience. The foundation pays teachers in the program $2,500 as an annual salary supplement and $350 to attend College Board training. They also receive a $100 bonus for each of their students who earn an exam grade of 3 or higher on AP's five-point scale. Vertical Team teachers receive an additional $1,000 salary supplement.

Students are not left behind in this program. They, too, are offered incentives and rewards for performance. All students receive partial reimbursement for the cost of their exams, and those who earn a grade of 3 or higher receive not only a partial fee reimbursement, but also a $1,000 check. Each AP school receives a $100 bonus for each AP exam graded 3 or higher, and special recognition awards of $1,000 are given annually to outstanding teachers and principals.

Financial rewards can be excellent motivators. Paul O'Donnell, the founder of the foundation that bears his name, says, "They use incentives all over the business world, but not in education, which is crazy. It works." And the numbers show it. This program has been instrumental in increasing both the number

of AP exams taken and the test scores. In 1993, the number of AP exams taken in math, science, and English was only 300. In 1996, the first year of the AP Incentive Program, that number more than tripled to 1,016. By 1999, the students who took AP exams totaled 2,143. And the students are doing well on the exams. In these Dallas schools, 100 per 1,000 juniors and seniors received a score of 3 or higher in math, science, and English in 1999. This is well above the national and Texas averages, which are 64 and 65 respectively.

What is surprising and encouraging is that these performance statistics work against the norm. The Dallas Public Schools share the problems of student underperformance and leadership instability that plague other large, urban school systems. But this program has forever changed the climate of the schools, according to teachers and administrators. Teachers said they were surprised at how bright the students were. At first, they did not believe there would be enough students who were prepared for the challenge of AP coursework.

Private Sector

Many small, rural schools struggle to fill classrooms of advanced courses – not because of students' lack of preparation, but because schools do not have enough students to take the classes or enough teachers to lead them. It is difficult for schools to justify to the community the need for a course that only a few students will take. The financial or personnel resources simply do not exist to support the small, specialized classes of an AP or IB curriculum.

But exciting new initiatives are beginning to offer the opportunity to take AP courses online through distance learning programs. For the next fiscal year, President Clinton has proposed a new $10 million initiative called Next Generation Technology which would provide grants to help develop high-quality AP courses on the Internet. This effort would take advantage of today's technology to expand the AP Program. Distance learning has the potential to reach large numbers of students at a low cost.

Apex Learning Inc., founded in 1997 by Paul Allen, the co-founder of Microsoft, provides online Advanced Placement courses in calculus, statistics, microeconomics, macroeconomics, and U.S. government and politics for about 100 schools nationwide. A leader in the growing market of AP online instruction, Apex will expand its course offerings to include history and English language and composition in fall 2000. These courses meet all College Board AP curriculum requirements, so students can earn school credit and prepare for Advanced Placement exams.

Schools that wish to offer Apex courses can sign up students on a per-course, per-student basis, allowing them to pay for instruction as needed. This process eliminates the strain on resources that normally prevents schools from offering an advanced course to only one or two students. And there is no large initial investment for the schools to offer the courses, because students can use computers that are already in the schools or in their homes. Schools also need no dedicated time or classroom space – students can complete coursework anytime during the day or evening at their own pace.

In an Apex course, an experienced AP teacher instructs up to 25 students from anywhere in the world. To develop their lessons, teachers use the sophisticated tutoring software and support materials that Apex has developed and supplement it with traditional textbooks and other readings. Courses are created in advance by an Apex team of curriculum developers, content experts, and AP instructors. The team's customized student interface immediately shows users where they are in a given lesson and what assignments they still need to complete. On any given day, students in the class may be at different points in the AP course.

Teachers track each student's progress through an advanced monitoring feature on the Apex course Web site and send weekly progress reports to the student, school, and parents via e-mail. This popular mode of communication also helps teachers interact with each student to answer questions, provide support, and evaluate assignments and tests. To communicate

with their fellow classmates, students share information, opinions, and solutions through online discussion groups.

Schools

In any community, the school is the linchpin in any effort to improve the education level for all students. All of the business, university, foundation, and government efforts will not change the status quo unless the schools can foster – and sustain – community support. Collaboration among the local school board, superintendents, principals, and teachers ensures the best educational opportunities for the area children. When schools engage partners and gain support for their initiatives, great improvements can result. In many communities, schools are leading efforts and working with other sectors – government agencies, businesses, foundations, colleges, and universities – to expand Advanced Placement exams to all students. Some local efforts include the following:

- **Woodrow Wilson Senior High School**, Washington, D.C., is an excellent example of a predominantly minority urban high school with a well-established Advanced Placement program that serves a substantial proportion of its students. In fact, the AP program at Woodrow Wilson is the oldest and largest in the D.C. public school system. In 1994-95, the school had 600 students in its AP program. Of the 15 subjects studied, the most popular were English and mathematics. In fact, the strong enrollments in AP English and math have spurred efforts in other AP areas, including U.S. history, U.S. government and politics, comparative government and politics, science, language, and computer courses. Enrollment has doubled over the past five years. Teachers led the effort to increase enrollment in AP courses by directly appealing to students to enroll in AP courses. They also appealed to the parents to encourage their children to enroll in these courses. The principal supports AP teachers by sending them to workshops and institutes, decreasing their class loads, and providing aides when needed.

- **Dade County Public Schools**, in Dade County, Florida, is the fourth largest school system in the nation and a longtime proponent of Advanced Placement. In 1970, just under 50 students participated in AP courses. By 1995, 6,000 Miami Dade students were enrolled in AP courses. The district largely credits an emphasis on a pre-AP curriculum for middle school students as its key to successfully expanding the AP program. Other approaches have included a strong concentration on school courses; student identification and recruitment, especially among minority students; funds for AP exam fees; and scholarships for top AP students.

- **Southside High School**, in San Antonio, Texas, is among the city's lowest in terms of parent income and student standardized test scores. But the number of Southside's AP students and their college-bound rate are among the area's highest. Many of Southside's students are first-generation high school graduates and college graduates, if they continue on to postsecondary education. To increase minority enrollment in AP courses, the school employs the following strategies: Through the Teacher Advisory Program, each student has a faculty advisor who meets with the student one-on-one throughout the year; buses are used to transport high school and middle school parents and students to College Night programs; the costs of the exams are paid for through funds from the soft drink machines, after-school dances, and business partnerships; and the school promotes its inclusive pre-AP initiative to provide ninth- and 10th-grade students with courses to prepare them for AP courses. Efforts like the Pathways Program and the Bridge Program help students make the transition from middle school to high school by providing a vertically aligned curriculum and by giving credit at both middle and high schools, respectively.

The College Board

The College Board recognizes the importance of preparing students for college before they enter high school. Students who remain at a seventh-grade reading level cannot succeed in

a college-level course by their junior or senior year in high school. The education system has failed them all along the way. To make sure more students are ready to take Advanced Placement courses, the College Board has started a pre-AP effort that targets those students who have traditionally been underrepresented in AP course offerings.

Pre-AP is not a prescribed set of courses or curriculum, but rather a combination of activities, skills, and strategies developed locally. Successful pre-AP efforts require strong administrative, parental, and community support and a commitment to high standards for all students. These efforts reinforce crucial academic skills beginning in the elementary and middle school years.

Partnership and collaboration at every point in the higher-standards equation—among teachers of all grade levels, administrators, schools, educational organizations, and the community—will foster an environment where AP programs can thrive. One particularly effective pre-AP effort is the establishment of vertical teams, which join middle school and high school teachers within specific subject areas. These teachers are committed to improving student achievement and preparation for Advanced Placement courses.

An Early Start Is Critical to Success

Clearly, the road to advanced courses needs to begin before high school. It even needs to begin before middle school. In fact, preparation for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses must begin at home. Parents need to read to their children and expose them to the spoken and written word right from the start. These efforts help a child build a good vocabulary, a strong predictor of reading success. One study of the vocabulary of first-graders found that those from high-income families had double the vocabulary as those from lower-income families. As a result, students from affluent backgrounds usually learn to read more easily than students from disadvantaged backgrounds. And we all know that reading is the foundation for higher learning.

One of President Clinton's and Secretary Riley's priorities is that all children will read well and independently by the end of third grade. But unfortunately, too many minority students have not mastered reading at the fourth grade level. In fourth grade, 64 percent of African-Americans and 60 percent of Hispanics read below the basic level, compared with 27 percent of whites and 31 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders. If we want to increase the number of poor and minority students in AP courses in high school, we need to raise reading achievement levels in the lower grades.

But for those students who are now in the school system, we cannot give up. All students deserve the support to be able to achieve to the high standards now in place in many states. After-school programs, Saturday tutoring sessions, summer school classes, and other efforts can help these students.

School has the power to interrupt and counter external negative environments, because school is the environment that they all have to come to. It's a golden opportunity.

-Lorraine Munroe
Executive Director
School Leadership Academy at the Center for Educational Innovation

We must stop lamenting the fact that many students fall well behind even basic standards. Lorraine Munroe, executive director for the School Leadership Academy at the Center for Educational Innovation, told attendees at the Department of Education's recent AP conference that she was tired of hearing teachers, parents, and administrators throw their arms up in despair when ninth-graders do not understand decimals and struggle to master reading. The noted educator and advocate compared that shocked outcry to a dentist exclaiming to a patient, "You know you've got cavities and you came to me?" Students are in school so they can learn. We need to take them where they are and get them to where they need to be – either in college or in a strong vocational program.

And this means *all* children. We need to hold all students to the same high standards, no matter their race or socioeconomic status. We cannot make excuses for students who are not achieving to high levels. We do not have the time. As Lorraine Munroe stated at the

conference, "School has the power to interrupt and counter external negative environments, because school is the environment that they all have to come to. It's a golden opportunity." And it is an opportunity we cannot afford to waste.

Together, parents, teachers, principals, civic leaders, government officials, and average citizens can raise the level of academic expectations for all high school children. Schools must show students that they believe students can learn to high academic levels by offering an energetic curriculum at all levels of the education system.

As Secretary Riley noted, "About the surest and fastest way to create an angry, 19-year-old, illiterate dropout is to give that young person a watered-down curriculum. Low expectations say to youngsters that they are not smart enough to learn anything more." And too often, that is what we are doing.

We must take advantage now of opportunities presented by the U.S. Department of Education to promote the benefits of curricula like Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and other college-level courses in our nation's high schools. We must make sure that all students who want to challenge themselves academically have the opportunities to do so, by participating in AP programs through classroom or online courses.

In addition, we must ensure that we continue efforts to raise the number of competent teachers to provide high-quality, demanding curricula. If federal and state governments, colleges and universities, private companies, nonprofit foundations, and local schools would step up their efforts and work together, then we could meet our goal to expand college-level courses to all students.

Please join our effort to raise student achievement and prepare students to succeed in college. For more information on how you can help your local schools and community offer college-level courses before college, call 1-800-USA-LEARN or visit http://www.ed.gov./offices/OESE/SIP/programs/advp.html.

The College Board